

THE  
DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE.

A BRIEF REVIEW OF REV. J. ROY'S TEACHING ON CATHOLICITY  
AND ON INSPIRATION.

BY REV. L. HOOKER,  
*A Minister of the Methodist Church of Canada.*

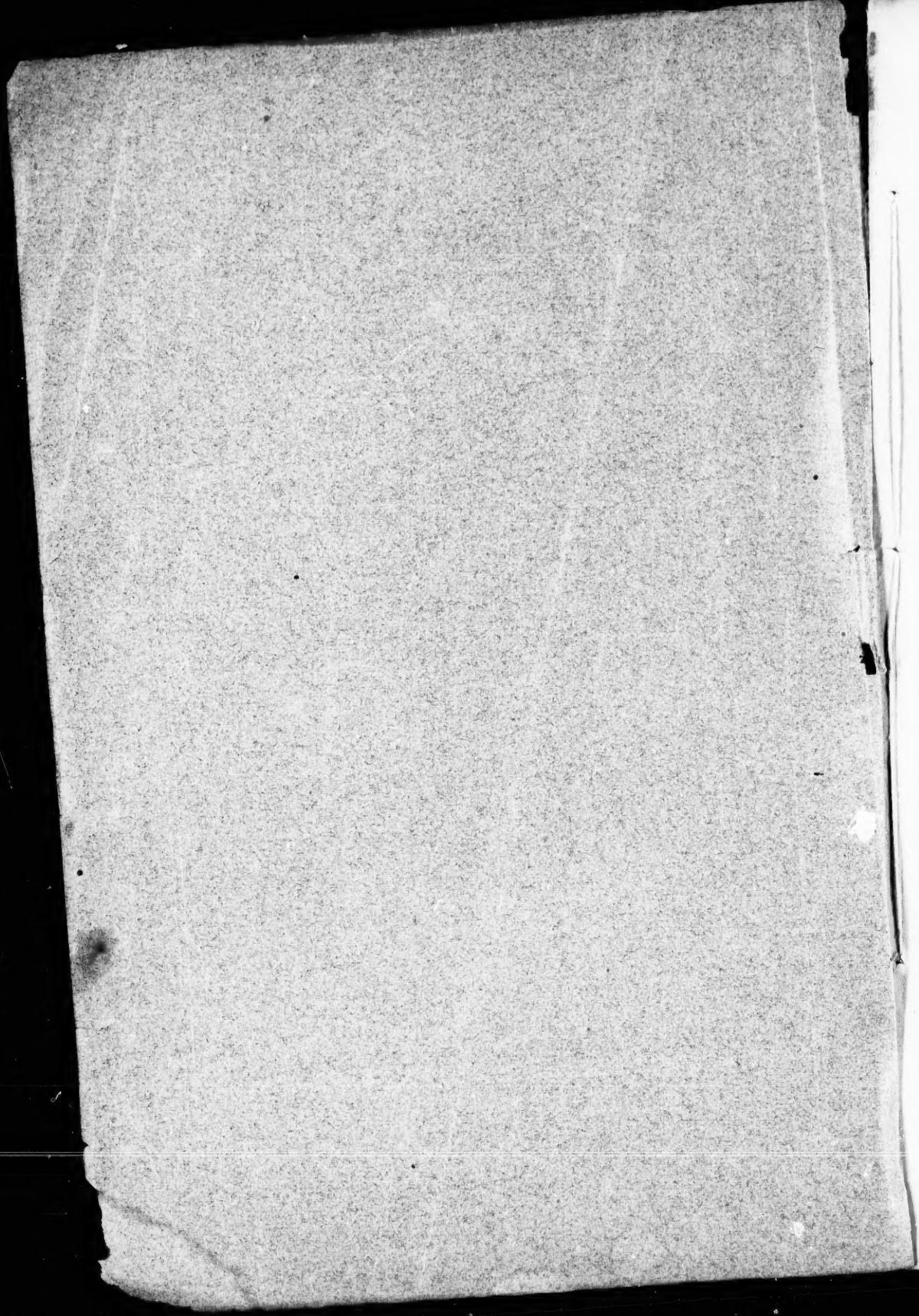
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men loved darkness rather than light."

*Living Words of Jesus.*

Montreal :

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## PREFACE.

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THESE pages represent the effect upon their writer, of the reading of Rev. J. Roy's recent publication. Its statements were found so startling, and its demands so revolutionary, that, in this one case at least the reader felt more strongly than ever the claims of the system of Theology assailed; and these thoughts were the instinctive protest which grew up in his mind.

As, in reading Mr. Roy's work, the impression was made that ability, and more especially learning, must be regarded as an unknown quantity, there is here no pretence of learned controversy.

As the thought of publication was not originally entertained, no effort was made to controvert everything which was not assented to, but simply to get to the foundations of all Theology.

When completed the sheets were sent to a friend, who deemed it the proper thing to put them in their present shape.

L. HOOKER.



## THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE.

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THE work recently published by the Rev. Mr. Roy opens, in a very artful manner, the whole question between revealed and so-called natural religion. The real subject is far from being all stated in the title. The question it discusses is too broad to be handled in a single paper. The present humble effort will, therefore, be satisfied with dealing with the one vital point raised, *the authority of the Scriptures*, only touching upon the other points as, following Mr. Roy's path, they lead into this grand citadel of the argument.

Those who have read this book will scarcely avoid the conclusion that, while Mr. Roy has read a great deal, he has thought, in an independent way, too little. His writing is fragrant with Bushnell, Parker, Robertson, and very many others; but he casts not over his reader the strong thrall of his own individuality, struggling in thoughts that lead and command. They will seek in vain who strive to find a single new thought in the whole book! Nevertheless the stains with which these pages dishonor the goodly fabric of Methodism will remain the longer, because cast up by the hand of one of her own children; and for this reason they merit a calm consideration, though no more be done than to meet often answered objections against revelation and against Methodism, by considerations many of which also bear the honor of age.

### I. CATHOLICITY—MR. ROY'S IDEA AND THE TRUE IDEA.

Mr. Roy finds his idea of catholicity in the original structure of Methodism, and traces very clearly the time and the cause of its ceasing to be catholic, after that manner. But it is very hard to account for his conception of what that early condition of Methodism was. Is he serious in taking the ground that Mr.

Wesley consented that *Unitarianism, Deism, and Materialism* should be propagated in Methodist pulpits? If this be not his meaning then he must refer to the absence of any doctrinal tests of private membership in the church; but in this respect Methodism is still catholic as in its earliest history; and, besides, this is a subject lying entirely outside the purpose for which his book was written. He is pleading the case of a minister who wishes to teach in the Methodist pulpit any thing he pleases. But if he does seriously mean that Mr. Wesley consented that Unitarianism, Deism, and Materialism should be taught by the ministers of the Methodist societies, then he is either more ignorant, or more designing, than his fellow laborers have ever thought him to be. To justify this position from Mr. Wesley's writings is to be guilty of taking them up with a determination to find certain pre-conceived views in them. By no other method of reading would stray expressions, taken aside from the general aim with which they were written, be made to teach principles at variance with the whole tenor of his life, and all his writings. In no other way can Mr. Roy's conclusions from the sermon on "Faith," for instance, be accounted for. Any unprejudiced reader would be led to conclusions just the reverse of those Mr. Roy derives from that sermon.

But, for the sake of dealing with the plea for latitudinarianism in the pulpit which Mr. Roy has uttered, and supported with much learning, eloquence and vehemence, let us allow that his representation of the matter is correct, that for more than three years Methodism was catholic in the sense of allowing Arminianism, Calvinism, Unitarianism, Deism and Materialism to grow side by side within its enclosure; and that at the end of that time it ceased to be catholic in that sense. Why did it cease? Because there must be a better kind of catholicity than that crude form of it which, according to Mr. Roy, Mr. Wesley constructed in his younger days, (and which, strangely enough, has captivated Mr. Roy, instead of the matured results of Wesley's life-long study of the Word of God.) If religion is anything better than child's play, there must have been visible to the mind of

God, antecedent to all church organizations, a system of truths which it will answer our purpose to call a catholicity of truth, and which the Divine Being designed to make known to mankind as the rule of faith and practice, and which should serve as the basis and bond of *ultimate* catholicity in communion. Now, still following Mr. Roy, Mr. Wesley's first notion of catholicity must have been very different from the divine ideal, for it made room for the Arminian, the Calvinist, the Unitarian and the Deist. In it he may or he may not have comprehended the whole of the divine ideal, but he certainly comprehended much that did not belong to it at all. Surely the Christ of the Arminian, potential with a full, *but conditional* salvation for every man, the Christ of the Calvinist with his limited atonement, the Christ of the Unitarian, depleted to mere humanity and making no sacrifice for sin, the deceiving or deceived human Christ of the Deist, could not all, nor, indeed, more than one of them, belong to a real catholicity ; the rest were elements of confusion. If Mr. Wesley saw it otherwise in the beginning he soon changed his mind, and began the work of purging his system of conflicting elements. How far he succeeded is another matter, and need not be treated just here. *He certainly moved in the right direction, unless it can be maintained that catholicity in religion means room for all possible views how conflicting soever and however destructive of each other.* If this be admitted as the correct view, then, if pushed to its natural limits, it admits Popery and Calvinism, for either of which Mr. Roy has no sympathy, and seems ready to fight them to the death ; it also admits Mohammedanism and even Mormonism within the pale of catholicity. And why should men be liberal on the point of doctrine only ? Why not have room for men who hold opposite views about theft, adultery, and murder, or of gambling as a business pursuit ? On these subjects different views have prevailed, and Revelation is as uncertain on the one subject as on the other.

But let us go deeper than Roy, than Wesley, than Methodism. CHRIST encourages no such prodigality. He said, if Mr. Roy will allow that we have any reliable record of his sayings, " Ye

shall know the *truth*, and *the truth shall make you free.*" Again, he said, "I am not come to send peace on the earth but a sword"—a sword which, so far from *catholicizing* with error, especially those forms of it which are the converse of the truth Christ delivered, shall smite it unto death, and so, ultimately, conquer peace, *i. e.* catholicity. A more extended application of the passage is certainly admissible, but it covers this ground also. Again, he said, "the Kingdom of heaven," (which must necessarily include its system of truth, "is like a little leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal until the whole lump was leavened.") Now the catholicity was, at the first, *in the leaven alone*, then in the leaven and *some of the meal*, *i. e.* in as much of it as the leaven had reduced to its own nature, then in *the whole lump*. But suppose that at the first, or at any time, an acid had coquettled with the leaven, and had persuaded it to be catholic, after Mr. Roy's fashion, what then? *Dead leaven and sour bread!* What the Church needs is a pure leaven, and a catholicity which rejects unleavened meal. That reckless liberality which mixes an acid with the leaven, and outruns its influence to sweep the yet unleavened meal into an unreal fellowship would be much better named prodigality. On this subject of catholicity we are led to these general conclusions:

1. There may be in any one of the sects a real catholicity of truth, a sufficient basis and bond of ultimate catholicity of communion.
2. There never will be a catholicity of communion until men have, to satisfaction, proved all things, and agreed as to what is true and right, and so come to have one fold, and exercise a common ministry, because they hold one Lord, one faith, and one baptism.
3. The catholicity for which Mr. Roy contends is not desirable, inasmuch as it cannot be one with God's ideal, and that the conflicting elements, the acid and the alkali, which he would bring together in one organization, are less likely to do harm when held by distinct bodies, and more likely when so held to.

find their level, to go up as truth or down as error. If the fleetness of two horses is to be tested you must not harness them to the same vehicle. Had the Calvinism which used to consign infants a span long to hell remained harnessed with Arminianism in the Methodist Church, it would not be as nearly defunct as it is to day.

## II. A POSITIVE REVELATION THE BASIS OF TRUE CATHOLICITY.

The present catholicity or non-catholicity of Methodism, or of any church, is to be decided by grave tests. The test questions must be: 1. *Did God attempt to convey to man a system of truth for his guidance in faith and practice?* 2. *If so, did He succeed in the attempt?* 3. *If He succeeded, has Methodism, in the condition of her fellowship, both lay and clerical, filled, exceeded, or fallen short of the measure of that system of truth?*

Let us see how Mr. Roy deals with these test questions.

*Did God attempt to give to man a system of truth for his guidance in faith and practice?* And with this question we may group another: *Did He succeed in the attempt?*

Upon close and candid review of all that the work before us contains upon God and Revelation we find that the positions the author has taken require it to be true that *God never even attempted such a work*. He assumes (p. 54) that the Scriptures "must be regarded as a fountain or as a *dictator*;" and (p. 61) informs us that he is "reduced to the conviction that the Bible is *not a dictator*." So low is his estimate of the Bible reduced that he limits the idea of its inspiration to a simple "impulse to write"—to write something—but insists that inspiration is not in the "form," nor in the "thought," nor in the "matter," of what was written under that "impulse." He is reduced to this conviction by the following considerations: 1. We have no better pledge of inspiration than the judgment of uninspired men. 2. The writings endorsed by these uninspired men contain incorrect statements, and, in even important passages, spurious glosses and interpolations. From these premises he concludes that the "matter" of the Bible is not inspired, and, therefore,

should not be allowed to dictate to the human intellect. All this implies that he holds the opinion that no *successful* attempt to make an authoritative revelation to man has ever been made by the Divine Being; for he asserts, in effect, that no *such revelation* has been made. Now, by means of far better logic than he has used to bring us to this point, he can be pushed farther out on the same line, and can be compelled to say that God never *attempted* such a revelation at all, for *it is not conceivable that the Deity could fail in such an attempt*, for the work of revealing truth to man lies far within the limits of His resources. But Mr. Roy has proved to his own satisfaction that there is no authoritative revelation in the Bible—nothing that is inspired, that can be allowed to dictate—*therefore he is forced to deny the attempt, on the part of God, to make such a revelation.* And what are the results of this denial, if it can be sustained? We have, *then*, no better pledge of the truth of any doctrine or of the authority of any precept than this—Moses, or Paul, or Jesus thought thus and so as to what man should believe and do. “Thus, saith the Lord,” is a worn-out phrase. Such notions of human responsibility, and the life after death, with its rewards and punishments, as even Mr. Roy holds, are then absurd in the extreme. Surely I cannot be held responsible to keep a law which the Supreme Ruler from His throne of majesty did not promulgate—a law which is not a dictator, for the sufficient reason that it did not come by inspiration of God; but, on the contrary, was gradually evolved from the moral and intellectual resources of human nature! The paternal and magisterial relationships of God to man are strangely interpreted in this scheme!

In the face of such destructive conclusions nothing can be allowed for the saving clauses with which the pronounced infidelity of this book is interlarded—clauses to the effect that the Scriptures are a “fountain” wherein is some truth and some error—and that “Christ Jesus is the only perfect expression of God’s highest law of love,” &c., &c. For of what value is it to know that the Bible is a fountain, if all the connection God has

with the contents thereof is that he furnished the "impulse" to put them there—but not the matter of them. Why, what, upon his *own* showing, does Mr. Roy know of "Christ Jesus," as a "perfect expression of God's highest law of love," or of any law, or of any truth *whatsoever*? Plainly, nothing at all. Why should he allow these Scriptures, after his masterly impeachment of their authority, to dictate to him the belief that there ever was any "Christ Jesus," and that He lived and taught as the Gospels represent? If his reasoning is sound he has swept away the whole Bible, Moses and the Prophets, Christ and the Apostles, and we are left, in very deed, orphans in the world, without God, without truth, without hope.

But we are persuaded better things of the Bible. There is no difficulty that cannot be fairly overcome, in accepting the Bible both as a *fountain* (though not quite in Mr. Roy's sense) and also as a *dictator*.

Let it be granted that we have no better pledge of inspired matter than the judgment of uninspired men,—what follows? That we have no inspired authoritative matter in the Bible? So Mr. Roy thinks. What, then, does he demand in such a revelation as he would allow to dictate? Evidently, a twofold inspiration; the first in the writers, that the matter may be of God, the second in the receiver, that he may be able to judge and know infallibly that it is revelation from God. It is passing strange that a man of such erudition and keenness of intellect did not detect the absurdities implied in this demand. Divine inspiration in each individual would render the first inspiration superfluous, as *each man would have it at first hand*, and would therefore be under no necessity of looking to a written revelation for truth. Beside, the thing demanded, so far from ending Mr. Roy's difficulty, would only push it a single step farther off. The case would stand thus:—here are books which profess to contain inspired "matter"; each individual is supposed to be inspired so that he can judge infallibly as to what is and is not inspired "matter"; but how can any man *know* that he is so inspired? Here we find the old difficulty. *His reason must*

*test his own inspiration ; and if it can do that it can test that of any books which profess to be inspired*—if it cannot, then he has no means of ascertaining that God has revealed anything to man. Still farther,—the thing demanded is contrary to the analogy of nature. The ministry of light is directed to the organ of sight ; and that of sound to the ear. Our bread and our clothes are contained in the primitive elements whose sum makes the physical world ; and, not by some supernatural operation in each case, but by natural organs—first of the plant, then of the animal, they are extracted therefrom for the use of man. Who thinks of demanding another sun whereby to see the one already in the heavens ? Having eyes, we need nothing more ; if we are blind, ten thousand extra suns would fail to reveal the original sun. Who thinks of obtaining food and raiment by means of a new miracle, other than that of creation ? or that the one shall be converted into bone and tissue, and the other into garments, by a new miracle ? In like manner, light and food and garments of beauty for the soul of man are in the Bible ; and his intellect, as an eye, must perceive them ; as a judge, must pronounce upon their origin, and suitableness to his wants ; and as a stomach, must digest and assimilate them. The province of the human intellect in the matter of religion is, not to discover—much less to invent ; but to perceive, to judge, and to appropriate that which is revealed by inspiration. It can no more *invent* the doctrines and precepts of a true religion than the eye can invent light, or the ear sound, or the stomach food. That it cannot *discover* the doctrines and precepts of a true religion will be shown farther on, for the special benefit of those who demand proof.

If there was inspiration, *and more*, in the sum of all the books that professed to be inspired, and man's intellect has rejected some and accepted some, it is well ; that is what his intellect is for. There is more than light in the sun, there is more than food in the primitive elements ; but our natural organs manage to get the light and the food all right, that is what they are for. But shall we say “ God did not kindle the light, nor create the mate-

rial and ordain the processes by which food is obtained" simply because there is more than light in the sun, and more than food in the elements? Should we be justified in saying so because, if such a thing could be, there were spurious suns in the heavens, and because there are hurtful forms of matter in the earth? Certainly not. The eye and the stomach would soon decide between the true and the false; and the true, when found, should move us all the more to recognize and adore the hand of God in its formation. So also, of the relation of man's intellect to revelation. It has done well to judge between the false and the true. It may reject something more of what is now called the Bible. It may separate between the matter that will then remain, and say, *this* was revealed by the Holy Ghost, and *that*, because it laid already within the compass of human knowledge, was not so revealed.

That the individual reason has the right to judge of the evidence and contents of all books professing to be inspired is freely conceded; but the question at issue is this,—have we, in the whole mass, any inspired matter at all?"—and to this our author has replied in unmistakable terms "*inspiration is not in the form, nor in the thought, nor in the matter, of the Bible.*" And there is another grave question which he has raised, but has left in a very unsatisfactory state, it is this:—have a mass of individual reasons—say a thousand, who are agreed that certain "matter" is inspired, and that it contains doctrines and precepts and promises which are essential to the salvation of men from their sins, the right to walk together in fellowship, to teach what they believe, and to exclude from their pulpits teachers who, it may be honestly, feel bound to teach doctrines which conflict with and destroy those which the mass, as honestly, believe to be true?

Mr. Roy has tried to reduce certain things which most good men venerate to absurdity. Let us see if there are not more absurdities than he has dreamed of. After having reasoned inspired matter out of existence, and rejected the dictatorship of the Bible, he goes on to talk of "Christianity" as a thing to be

preached, believed, and practiced ! Is not this absurd or something worse ? He borrows from the Bible his teachings degrade, the idea and the name of Jehovah, of Christ, of religion, and then clothes these ideas and names, as though they were nothing more than wooden lay figures, with purple, or fine linen, or sackcloth, according to his own fancy ; and then he calls upon the world to come and bow down to the god he has constructed, to receive the Christ of his imagination, to practice the religion he has invented, the religion in the invention of which he has been trammelled by no dictator ! The christianity he preaches will find few converts among men of thought. For the object of their worship, the rule of their practice, and the basis of their hope of a life after death, they will require a little higher authority than the mere say so of any man, or of any number of men. And, again, is it not palpably absurd to deny to a mass of men a right which is claimed with so much vehemence for each individual in the mass ? Mr. Roy has done this. He asserts the right of the individual reason to criticize the evidences and contents of the Scriptures, and retain such "facts" as it finds, and reject the rest ; and I greatly mistake the Methodist Church if there is to be found in it a single person who will deny that right.

But, if a thousand men are agreed that the Bible contains inspired matter, matter that is essential to the salvation of men from their sins, and venture to respect their own intelligence so far as to believe that they have ascertained the facts and the meaning contained in that inspired matter, and that they are bound to teach that, and nothing contrary to it—then, according to this astute reasoning, if it shall so happen that *one* in the thousand chooses to deny and attack what the rest hold to be inspired matter, and matter essential to salvation, *nine hundred and ninety-nine intelligences will lose their right to judgment and conscience*. One may impeach the intelligence of nine hundred and ninety-nine, and insist on preaching in their churches and in their name doctrines which they conscientiously believe to be the opposite of truth, and inimical to the salvation

of men ; but the nine hundred and ninety-nine must not impeach the intelligence of one, nor refuse him countenance, fellowship and God-speed in a work which, in their judgment, is a work of destruction. That would be inexcusable narrowness, bigotry, tyranny !

Let us not be understood to maintain that majorities are always right ; but, to purge himself from absurdity in this matter, Mr. Roy must prove that they are always wrong, and should always renounce their views at the bidding of the dissenting minority ; or, that, simply because they are majorities, they are divested of that right of judgment and conscience which, he stoutly maintains, belongs to each individual in the whole mass.

Let it be granted, farther, that there are some incorrect statements and spurious glosses and interpolations in the books which uninspired men have approved as inspired books ; does it follow that there is no inspired matter in them ? That postulate requires no more than this, that the work of criticism is not yet complete. Certainly the Holy Ghost never inspired an incorrect statement ; and spurious glosses and interpolations are blemishes on the sacred text. Errors which have crept into the text in the past, and others which may creep in in the future require the closest watchfulness from all who are interested in preserving the Scriptures in their purity. Whoever can clearly point out the passages wherein these blemishes lurk should make haste to do so ; let us have nothing but the pure gold ; but let the work be done with the utmost care and reverence. The judgment of the more sober and competent critics of that text seems to be that : 1. The passages which have suffered by means of glosses and interpolations should not be held to be authoritative if it is found difficult or impossible to restore them to their original form. 2. It should be held that the Holy Ghost, in inspiring men with both impulse and matter, did not undertake the ordinary work of the historian, but, only to deliver, in the department of history, such facts as required a miracle of knowledge, as, for instance, the creation of the heavens and the earth ; and that, therefore, while the historical state-

ments of the Bible are, in the main, correct, any error as to matter of fact which has crept into them should not be held to invalidate the doctrine of divine inspiration in the other departments of Scripture.

Let all this be done, and there still remain in the Sacred Scriptures five great departments of matter which were given by inspiration of God.

1. The accounts they contain of such events as took place before the creation of man, or beyond the reach of his ordinary means of knowledge.

2. Those declarations, commonly called doctrines, relating to God, his being, attributes, relationships, and works of creation, providence and grace ; to Jesus the Christ, his attributes and relationships, both divine and human, and his work of salvation ; to the Holy Ghost, his attributes and ministry ; to man, his origin, attributes, relationships, the origin of the moral and physical evils which afflict him, and his destiny in the life after death.

3. The moral precepts of the Bible, particularly the Ten Commandments.

4. The promises, wherein, upon specified conditions, God has bound himself to do specified things for man.

5. The prophecies.

The reasons for believing that these five departments of Scripture were given by inspiration of God, and which have been challenged by the positions taken by Mr. Roy, may be grouped under the following heads : (1) *They are true to fact* ; (2) *If true to fact, they must have been given by inspiration of God* ; (3) *If given by inspiration of God, they were intended and must be allowed to dictate upon the subjects of which they treat*.

1. *They are true to fact.* Whether any given statement is true to fact or not may be ascertained by competent testimony, by experience, or by both. In the present case both sources of assurance are available. *Jesus Christ is a competent witness.* Mr. Roy admits this much. Christ is to him (p. 72) "the Great Head of the Church, and the perfect incarnation of God ;" (p. 60) "the living embodiment or incarnation of his (God's)

thought." Now *Jesus Christ believed that the Scriptures were true to fact.* Part of them he endorsed by quoting them over and over again as the word of God, by claiming that they testified, beforehand, of himself, and by expounding the things concerning himself which were contained in "Moses and all the prophets" —"in all the Scriptures." See Luke xxiv. 27. Part of them he delivered from his own lips. To say nothing of the "Epistles" and the "Book of Revelation," Christ certainly believed that the matter he endorsed and delivered was true to fact. *The testimony of Jesus, who is the "Faithful and True Witness," is corroborated by the powerful attestation of human experience.* We know that human experience does not test every thing contained in the Scriptures; but whatever of their contents it has tested it has found true to fact; and it has proved nothing false. Wherever the teachings of the Bible concerning God, law, and grace have been received as true, and have been conscientiously followed, individuals have been purified in life, and comforted in death, and nations have been exalted to permanent honor and greatness. As individuals, men find more than purity and comfort; *they find God himself, "the living God;"* they experience contact and fellowship with him. As the chart is proved true to fact when the mariner guides his vessel through the trackless waters to the desired haven by its direction, so the Scriptures are proved true to fact when, guided by them, the human soul is delivered from the dominion of sin and exalted into fellowship with God. A million living and credible witnesses may be summoned, among them some of the most gifted and cultivated minds in the whole world, whose testimony, from personal experience, would be that the Scriptures are true to fact as far as human experience can test them. If, then, Jesus is a competent witness—which will be granted by most men in this day—and if the teachings he delivered and endorsed have been verified by the experience of mankind wherever the test conditions have been fairly met, it follows that those teachings are true to fact. And let it be remembered that, although experience does not, cannot, in this life reach to and verify everything that is taught in the Scriptures,

the things it does not reach are, nevertheless, vouched for in the testimony or in the utterances of Jesus. It is not necessary, for the purposes of this writing, to answer the objections of those who deny the competency of Jesus to declare what is true in religion, and who discredit the experience of men as honest and as intelligent as themselves—experience which does not contradict the experience of the objectors, for they have never placed themselves in a condition to test the matter by experience. To deny the facts of electricity in the face of the teachings of such men as Faraday, Field, Morse and Galvani, and against the experience of a man having hold of the poles of a galvanic battery, because we never experienced a shock from electricity, would be less absurd than to reject the testimony of Jesus and the experience of his disciples, as to the facts of religion. *His disciples, by the million, have hold of the poles of the battery; and he has shown himself to be more competent in the matter of religion than the best of them are in the matter of science.*

2. *If the scriptures are true to fact they must have been given by inspiration of God.* A single proposition will show the strength of this position. The scriptures, in the five departments for which inspiration is claimed, contain matter which if it is true to fact, could not have been discovered by mere human research.

What do we, or can we, *know* of God when once we have discarded the idea of inspiration? Absolutely nothing. We may imagine and conjecture; but to this day it remains true that by searching it is impossible to "find out God." Prof. Tyndall, after reaching the remotest outposts which had been marked on the chart, struck out bravely for the poles of science, and he came back to us with the brawn and scar of unprecedented toil upon him, came back enriched by many new discoveries—but with the old and oft-repeated confession of the ages upon his lips, "*I cannot find God.*" In the Scriptures, some of them the oldest books in the world, we find a different language. To whatever intelligence we attribute that language he certainly entertained no doubt of the being, and saw no mystery in the

nature of God. Infinitely more at home with his subject than the student of nature is with a fly or a blade of grass, *he dogmatizes throughout*—he asserts, defines, describes—but never doubts, never argues, within the limits of a subject which has baffled the keenest research of all the great scientists of the world.

What do we *know* of the human soul, if we discard the idea of inspiration? Nothing. Here, again, we may imagine and conjecture, but by these means we can gain nothing worthy of the name of knowledge. What anatomist has ever been able to discover the soul, or its “local habitation,” in any of the organs of the body? At the solemn moment of death, who ever saw anything that would favor the idea that *some part of the man did not die*? True, we attribute intellect, sensibility and will to some part of man; but who has separated, in thought, between that part and the rest, and named it the soul, and described it as spiritual and immortal—in fact, has assumed to have a thorough knowledge of that which, though in and of man, has never been seen or demonstrated by man? That Intelligence, and no other, which dictated the Bible. It is there, in the oldest books in the world, that we find the only authoritative treatment of the human soul—and such a treatment as assumes that, to the author, the subject presented neither mystery nor difficulty.

And what do we *know*, independent of inspiration, of a life after death? Who has returned from that mysterious bourn to tell us that it is a fact, and to describe its experiences? The whole subject is one of impenetrable mystery to all except that Intelligence which dictated the Bible. To him it presents no difficulty whatever. More confident than the philosopher who sees the butterfly of the future in the grub of the present, (but cannot assume that no calamity will prevent the consummation,) the author of the Bible, with no trace of doubt or hesitation, affirms the life after death, its employments and experiences.

And how shall we account, if we discard inspiration, for that Law, and that Covenant of grace, which have been promulgated as the Law and Covenant of Jehovah? Shall we say that they are the fictions of men? That cannot be. The testimony of

Jesus and the experience of mankind have proved that they are true to fact. Shall we say, then, that they are discoveries made by the writers of the Bible ? This would require some things to be true that would choke the most credulous man in the world. It would require it to be true that the writers of the oldest books in the world, in those remote ages of mental darkness and disability, were so much better scientists than Faraday and Tyndal, and Huxley and Draper ; that they solved all the problems of Universal Philosophy—including in the term the profoundest mysteries of man and of God ! that, with nothing but suggestions of nature, they conceived the idea of a personal Deity ! that they fixed their lofty ambition upon the discovery and analysis of the infinite God, and said, "this inscrutable Being, who hath shunned to declare himself, who hath hidden himself in obscurity and silence, shall yield the secrets of his nature, his purposes, his law and his administration to our investigations :" that they pushed their adventurous way to the very person of God : that they penetrated within the circle of his nature, *and conquered the knowlege of his attributes—and of his very thoughts*—so effectually that they were able to come back to the world and say—these *precepts* express the will and constitute the Law of God, and these *promises* express his purpose of grace toward those who meet the annexed conditions. No man in his senses will venture to say that the writers of the Bible did or could do these things. But, if the testimony of Jesus and the experience of mankind forbid us to believe that the Law and the Covenant of grace are the mere *fictions* of men, and their subject matter forbids us to believe that they are the *discoveries* of men, then, the conclusion becomes unavoidable, that they were given by inspiration of God. Beside, it is clear that, in order to be operative as Law and Covenant, they must needs come by inspiration and not by discovery. The theory of discovery neither binds man to fulfil the Law, nor God to fulfil the Covenant.

And what explanation of the prophecies can be given if we deny inspiration ? Facts are grand things. It is a fact that the books of the Old and the New Testament date far back in the history

of mankind. The dates of the various books of the Bible are approximately correct. It is also a fact that events are foretold in the Bible which did not occur until hundreds, in some cases thousands, of years after the foretelling; and foretold with such accuracy of detail that the historian in recording the event, might have used the very language of the prophet who foretold it. These prophecies relate to the Messiah not only in a general way but also to minute details concerning his birth, life, death, burial and resurrection; to prominent events in the history of nations; and, in two instances, to individual men, Cyrus and Josiah, who were named the one, nearly two hundred and the other more than three hundred years, before they were born. No theory hostile to the genuineness of these prophecies will stand the test of strict scrutiny. If it is claimed that they were written after the events they profess to foretell, a reference to the history of the Jews, whose history and chronology belong to the records of the world, and whose religious and national life was intimately interwoven with the very books in which most of the prophecies are found, is a sufficient refutation. If it is claimed that they were fulfilled by conspiracy on the part of the person, in whom they find their fulfilment, so many absurdities are implied in the assertion, and it is so utterly incapable of proof that no man of sense will long defend it. Who can seriously entertain the thought that, for the sake of fulfilling recorded prophecies some of them hundreds, even thousands of years old, and while interlaced commercially and otherwise with surrounding nations who cared nothing for the fulfillment, the statesmen, generals and monarchs of the Jewish nation conspired to be and to do the thing foretold, and succeeded in the attempt? that they fought ruinous battles, surrendered their territory, their cities and their sacred temple to the destroyer, and went into a long and calamitous captivity—and all to fulfil, by conspiracy, certain ancient prophecies? Who can believe that men otherwise grand in their lives, with Jesus Christ the great Model Man of the world at their head, could form themselves into a band of contemptible conspirators? And what

proof that they did so can be offered ? Nothing but an unsupported assertion.

If it is claimed that the foreknowledge evinced by the prophets was not the result of inspiration, but of calculation, it remains for the defenders of that theory to show that they possessed the data and endowments of genius necessary to account for the knowledge, two hundred years before the event, that a man named Cyrus should take the great city of Babylon and restore the Jews to Palestine ; that a virgin should conceive and bear a child, the Messiah ; that exactly thirty pieces of silver should be the price for which he should be betrayed, &c. &c. The absurdity of this theory is self evident. But if the so-called prophecies were not written after the events they profess to foretell, if they were not fulfilled by conspiracy, if they were not the result of calculation, then they were real prophecies ; and, as such, constitute a branch of knowledge for which no endowment of the human mind and no degree of human effort, can account—they were given by inspiration of God. The case is made doubly strong when we add the fact that Jesus Christ endorsed the prophecies of “ Moses and all the prophets ” concerning himself and expounded them to his disciples.

3. *If the scriptures were given by inspiration of God they were intended, and must be allowed, to dictate upon the subjects of which they treat.* This is self evident, and therefore need not be proved. It may be necessary, however, to deal with certain objections concerning the intricacies and mutability of language which Mr. Roy has raised, and which, in his judgment, entirely destroy the dictatorship of the Bible, even if its original inspiration is granted. Surely Mr. Roy was jesting, though it was a very poor jest on a very grave subject, when he claimed that because a certain Greek word means one of two distinctly opposite things according as it has an acute accent or a grave—because the true reading of a certain passage depends upon the existence or non-existence of a little line in the centre of a Greek letter, making it an Omicron or a Theta, the dictatorship of the Bible is not to be held. The accent has its well defined value in the

Greek orthography, and each letter in the Greek Alphabet its peculiar form—and yet inspiration can have no expression in the Greek language, because the accent modifies the meaning of words, and a little line in the centre distinguishes the Theta from the Omicron! This is equal to claiming that inspiration cannot be expressed in any language for the reason that the writers *may* use a wrong letter in spelling a word, or may form a letter imperfectly, or may commit some other error in orthography. It is hard to read the pages which deal with this part of the subject without thinking of pedantry. There are many ministers who read their Bibles in the original, and who never advertise the fact in their congregations; but who, with much faithfulness, bring out the true meaning, without damaging statements concerning the authorized version.

Here, with something of pomp, and no small array of learned names, three passages are cited to illustrate the fallibility of the Bible in respect to its form. They shew how an involved grammatical structure in the original may render the discovery of the meaning impossible; or an accent, or a line in the middle of a letter, may give a different meaning to a passage. But all the cases of this kind are known, and like the three before us, they have a very simple history. As an example take the most important one referred to, 1. Tim. 3 and 16. "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh." The habit of anciently copying words in abbreviated forms made it possible in the original that a stroke, or the absence of it, in the middle of a letter, would determine whether in this passage a word was to be translated as, "God," or as the relative pronoun, "which." Now in the original copy there may not have been any stroke; or there may have been, but some copyist omitted it in a subsequent copy; or much use, and careless handling of the MSS. may have obliterated it. Therefore the value of any particular MSS., as evidence upon the subject, is destroyed. Granting all, the worst result is that we know not whether to read this passage "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh;" or "Great is the mystery of Godliness: which was

manifest in the flesh." We cannot discover whether Paul meant that "the mystery of godliness," or "God" was "manifest in the flesh." Admitting this, does the great body of truth contained in the Bible suffer loss? Not at all, for elsewhere, in passages never disputed or doubted, the truth, which this passage teaches as it stands in our version, is clearly taught. In John 1 & 14 we have "The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory. \* \* \* And in the first verse of the same chapter we are taught "The word was God." Here then, in unmistakeable terms we have "God manifest in the flesh," and that is quite equivalent to an authoritative assertion that the stroke should be put in the letter in the other passage so that the doubtful word will be rendered "God," which will harmonize much better with the context than the other.

In a similar manner all the cases he mentions, as well as the facts under the head of incorrect statements in the Bible, may be disposed of. No one needs to be told that occasional errors, especially where numbers are concerned, have crept into manuscript copies, and that learning and piety have industriously detected and exposed them.

But what is established by all this? What nobody disputes—that copies and translations may contain defects: but not that the matter contained in the Bible is not addressed to men with Divine authority, nor that there is any uncertainty as to what the Bible as a whole teaches; nor that the original copies may not have been inspired by God, even in the form,—though no claim is here set up that inspiration extends thus far.

But for relief we turn from all human reasoning on either side, to Jesus, "the perfect incarnation of God." In spite of all the perils of orthography he beheld in Moses and the Prophets truth which was to *dictate*, and which was more potent to lead men to repentance than the testimony of "one from the dead."

Let it be granted that there are some passages so beset with grammatical and other difficulties that the best scholarship finds it difficult, sometimes impossible, to ascertain the meaning from the text; does it follow that this invalidates the dictatorship of

the Bible? Every student of the Bible knows that such passages are few in number comparatively; and that in no case of any importance is the inquirer after truth shut up to a single passage. In *nearly every* case the obscure passages can be elucidated by those which are plain.

There is no insuperable difficulty, in the objection based upon the mutability of the meaning of words. The Divine Being took such measures as effectually guarded his truth against the damage which might have resulted from the mutations of language. In two ways that truth has been, in a manner, *stereotyped*. First, the languages in which it was originally written ceased to be spoken languages soon after they had received their sacred deposit, and, ever since, have had a fixed meaning. Second, that truth has been written, by means of figurative expressions, on the very face of nature, whose features never change. The sun, the mountain, the rivers, the flowers, the vine, the bread of this life, the fatherly instincts of the human heart,—in fact, nearly every familiar object in nature has had stereotyped upon it some part of that truth which came, originally, by inspiration of God, and will testify the same thing to the latest generations. If, to these considerations, we add the profound scholarship and tireless industry which have been and are being consecrated to the work of elucidating the sacred text, and the promised aid of the Holy Ghost in the search after truth, it is not too much to say that the true sense of the Scriptures may be ascertained; and, when it is ascertained, it should be allowed to dictate.

Nothing could well be more perplexing and misleading than Mr. Roy's language, when we take into one view what he has said of Christ, and then write opposite, his views of the scriptures. Christ is the perfect incarnation of God" "the living embodiment or incarnation of his (God's) Thought"; and yet in the Bible, part of which Christ delivered with his own lips, and a still larger part of which he endorsed without correction, Mr. Roy finds no "infallible dictatorship," but, only "*a source of truth given by godly men from a purpose inspired in them by that providence who guides all minds that come within the circle of his spirit.*

*tual laws!*" It is time to make an end of the sickening and misleading talk about the excellence of Christ as a teacher and a model, which has become quite the style with a certain wing of the so called advanced thinkers of the day. Roy, Renan and the rest of that school fairly beggar the languages in which they write to say nice, well-sounding, beautiful things of Christ; but, just at the point where you expect them to

"Bring forth the royal diadem,  
And crown him Lord of all"

you find something that impeaches at once his Deity, his inspiration, and his intellect. If the teaching Christ delivered and endorsed is not infallible, dictator-truth, then he is, at the best, a mistaken enthusiast, at the worst an impostor. If Christ is "the perfect incarnation of God, the living embodiment or incarnation of his (God's) Thought," then the dictatorship of the Bible is established.

In this paper no attempt has been made to exhaust the argument for the inspiration and authority of the scriptures; only an humble contribution, sufficient to meet any doubts awakened by what Mr. Roy has urged, is intended. That the teaching of the Bible is true to fact has been proven by competent testimony, and by experience. It has been shown that, if they are true to fact, they must have come by inspiration of God, and not by human discovery, because they contain matter which was altogether beyond the reach of mere human research. It has been assumed as self evident that if they came by inspiration of God they were intended and must be allowed to dictate on all the subjects of which they treat.

*Has Methodism, in the conditions of her fellowship, both lay and clerical, filled, exceeded or fallen short of the measure of that system of truth?*

As far as Mr. Roy is concerned this question may be laid aside for an indefinite period. Whether Methodism has attained "perfection" or not, Mr. Roy has paid her the splendid tribute of acknowledging, in effect, that one necessary step in his attack on her theology, and her conditions of fellowship, was a denial of

the inspiration and authority of the Bible. Here, for the present, we will let the matter rest. When he lays aside the wooden sword of human fancies and returns to the charge armed with "the sword of the spirit, *which is the Word of God*," he will have full liberty to strike without mercy whatever, in Methodism, is contrary to "the faith once delivered to the saints."

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